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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Protection of Palestinian students and educational institutions and safeguarding of the security of the facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the occupied Palestinian territory

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 46/46 K of 9 December 1991, the operative paragraphs of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Condemns the repeated Israeli raids on the premises and installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to refrain from such raids;

"2. Deplores the policy and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, which have led to the prolonged closure of educational and vocational institutions, a large number of which are operated by the Agency, and the repeated disruption of medical services;

"3. Calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to open immediately all closed educational and vocational institutions and to refrain from closing them thereafter;

"4. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session on the implementation of the present resolution."

2. On 18 March 1992, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any steps his Government had taken or envisaged taking in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 30 June 1992, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

> "This resolution is unbalanced, distorting the role and policy of the Government of Israel. The policy of the Government of Israel has been, and remains, to encourage the improvement and development of the educational system in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. During the period of Israel's administration, the level of education and literacy in these territories has improved markedly and many new institutions of learning were established.
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> "Since December 1987, however, the schools have frequently been exploited as centres for the organizing and launching of violent activities.
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> "Measures taken by the authorities have been a direct result of, and in reaction to, activities which have nothing to do with education.
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> "Those measures have been successful and have enabled the authorities to permit the reopening of all educational institutions, including all seven institutions of higher education in the administered territories, as recently recognized by 26 C/Resolution 16 of UNESCO."

4. The following information concerning Israel's compliance with General Assembly resolution 46/46 K is based on reports from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. It covers the period from 1 July 1991 to 30 June 1992 and relates exclusively to UNRWA educational institutions and other facilities. Further information is contained in the annual report 1/ of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the above-mentioned period.

5. During the period under review, there were 117 cases of unauthorized entry into UNRWA premises in the West Bank by the Israeli authorities. Of these, 62 related to schools and 25 to health centres. In the Gaza Strip there were 210 such cases, of which 118 related to schools and 69 to health centres. UNRWA has taken up these cases with the Israeli authorities who, in a number of instances, have claimed that UNRWA premises were entered because stones had been thrown from within or stone-throwers were being chased into the premises.

6. During the same period, there was one fatality and 138 cases of injury among students and trainees at UNRWA educational institutions in the West Bank. The corresponding figures for the Gaza Strip were five fatalities and 637 injuries. These casualties were attributable to beatings, tear-gas

inhalation, rubber bullets and live ammunition. In addition, a total of 259 students and trainees in the West Bank and 43 in the Gaza Strip were detained, of whom 144 in the West Bank and 37 in the Gaza Strip were released by 30 June 1992.

7. In late 1991 UNRWA's three training centres in the West Bank completed the 1990/1991 academic year, interrupted as a result of military closures and the general curfew imposed during the Gulf War. The 1991/1992 academic year began on 18 November 1991 (for the Kalandia Training Centre) and on 17 December 1991 (for the Ramallah Men's and Women's Training Centres). An average of 21 per cent of academic time was lost owing to general strikes, curfews and severe weather conditions. Moreover, instruction was interrupted during March 1992, in solidarity with Gaza trainees who were being prevented by the Israeli authorities from attending the centres because of a new requirement that they should obtain permits to stay in the West Bank. Out of concern for educational pursuit and the demands of the students who were not allowed to leave Gaza, the Agency requested and obtained permits from the Israeli authorities for students from Gaza attending UNRWA training centres in the West Bank. However, of a total of 200 students from the Gaza Strip attending Ramallah and Kalandia Training Centres, 17 students did not receive permits to study in the West Bank. The Gaza Training Centre lost 18 per cent of days owing to strikes, 1 per cent because of curfew, 1 per cent owing to military closure orders, and 4 per cent owing to closure by the UNRWA administration for security considerations.

8. In the West Bank, a total of 17.2 per cent of school time was lost between September 1991 and June 1992, owing primarily to military closures, general strikes and curfews. In the Gaza Strip, the corresponding amount of school time lost was 12.4 per cent. Two schools were closed throughout the entire year by a military closure order.

9. On 27 May 1992, following the stabbing of an Israeli resident of the Kfar Darom settlement in the Gaza Strip by a Palestinian, settlers from the settlement attacked the nearby UNRWA elementary school at Deir el-Balah on three separate occasions in the course of several hours. More than 200 children were inside the school taking their final examinations. In one attack the settlers used a bulldozer to raze the school's fence. Eventually, the military authorities restored calm and UNRWA staff evacuated the children.

10. During the reporting period, the Agency provided students in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with distance education and self-learning materials, but such measures can provide only partial compensation for lost classroom time. Preliminary analysis of achievement tests that UNRWA administered in 1991 to all grade levels in these areas discloses a detrimental effect on the educational performance of students, especially those in the lower elementary grades and on subjects such as mathematics and sciences. In the West Bank, the Israeli authorities have taken the position that UNRWA should conform to the school openings and times of schools run by the Civil Administration. UNRWA did not agree to subordinate the opening and closure of schools to the

Civil Administration programme but was, however, forced to end the school year in the West Bank at the same time as schools operated by the Civil Administration because security considerations were invoked and a military closure order served on UNRWA.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/47/13), paras. 69-72 and 81-84.